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Chairman: Ms. Martensson (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Sweden)

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In the absence of Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman), Ms. Martensson (Sweden), Vice Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 115: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/56/203, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/342-S/2001/852, A/56/453 and 488)

1. **Ms. Clarke** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that it was now globally recognized that investing in children was the best investment a Government could make. Despite progress achieved in implementing many of the goals set at the World Summit for Children, held in New York in 1990, the situation of women and children continued to be precarious. Poverty, conflict, chronic instability and disease, including HIV/AIDS, threatened to erode developmental gains in many countries. The Caribbean Community remained committed to the postponed special session on children, whose occurrence was an integral part of commitments made at the Millennium Assembly. Those commitments were as relevant as they had been before the global focus on terrorism.

2. Street children, teenage pregnancy and domestic child abuse were widespread in the Caribbean. Children were having sex as early as age 10, and teenagers in the region revealed the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS. CARICOM Governments, fully cognizant of the need to tackle those key problems, continued to allocate resources to social development. Special programmes in health and education had been devised specifically for adolescents — a particularly vulnerable group who made up the majority of the region's population. It was recognized, moreover, that adolescents would exert a profound influence on future generations, and played an important role in caring for younger siblings.

3. There was growing recognition of the need to reform the administration of juvenile justice with a view to incorporating the relevant international standards. Given that the situation differed from country to country, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was helping to carry out situational analyses in the region.

4. The Caribbean countries recognized the importance of making academic and vocational activities accessible to all young people, particularly in order to discourage them from resorting to crime and drugs. There was also a need for special community-based services to cater for the needs of young people. Given that the financial resources of Governments in the Caribbean were limited, many such services were provided by non-governmental organizations.

5. The Caribbean countries could boast successes in early education, maternal and child health, immunization and welfare. The region had also managed to avoid the extremes of child abuse witnessed in other parts of the world. However, children not attending school and those who worked or lived on the streets had been identified by UNICEF as requiring urgent attention.

6. Despite the pressing need for the international community to deal with terrorism, it was to be hoped that the goals of poverty eradication and HIV/AIDS prevention would not be sidetracked. It was also all the more urgent to address the root causes of the involvement of children in armed conflict, in particular through poverty reduction efforts, expanded educational opportunities and the involvement of young people in post-conflict reconstruction and community development. In addressing issues of sexual exploitation and child trafficking, the focus should be on improving access to quality education — especially for girls — and on providing economic support for families. The Caribbean countries endorsed the view that the private sector also had a role to play in that regard, as well as legal responsibilities in respect of international human rights standards.

7. CARICOM countries remained committed to the promotion of children's rights at the national level, as evidenced by programmes in the media and events sponsored by both Governments and non-governmental organizations. UNICEF had recommended, however, that, as part of their efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the region's Governments should seek new policy solutions to the child protection dilemmas they faced.

8. **Mr. Nsemi** (Congo) said that his country reaffirmed its support for the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and renewed its commitment to implementing the related Plan of Action, adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children. His delegation hoped that the document resulting from the special session on children would take into account the interests of all children,

particularly the children of Africa, whose specific needs and situation had been highlighted at the regional preparatory meetings.

9. Although the circumstances were particularly difficult, owing to the civil war and socio-political tensions, the Congo was trying to improve the conditions of its children, the primary victims of armed conflicts, poverty, malnutrition and disease. It had established an institutional framework, including the creation of a Ministry for Social Affairs responsible for promoting activities to protect children and women, an inter-ministerial committee to support the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and an intersectoral planning and monitoring unit to collect, analyse and publish information on the situation of children. It had adopted policies designed to implement the recommendations of the World Summit for Children.

10. After years of conflict and destruction, much work had to be done to ensure the survival, protection and education of the nation's children. The conflict had seriously impaired the fight against children's diseases and access to drinking water. Before the conflict, a high proportion of children had attended school but, currently, pre-school education was almost non-existent and relatively few children received basic education.

11. With the help of United Nations specialized agencies and other humanitarian agencies, the Congo had taken measures to provide special protection for children affected by the armed conflict. The Government and international financial institutions had made the fight against poverty a priority of the interim post-conflict programme 2000-2002 and it was urgent to renegotiate the country's external debt in order to free up funds for the most vulnerable sectors.

12. **Ms. Kapalata** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her delegation agreed that the need to complete preparatory work for the special session was all the more urgent in the context of the regrettable events of 11 September. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been translated into the national language, Kiswahili, in order to facilitate its implementation at all levels of society. A national programme of action concerning child survival, protection and development had also been elaborated, with valuable assistance from UNICEF and other bilateral donors.

13. In recognition of the fact that ignorance was more expensive than education, the Government had taken the courageous step of universalizing basic primary education. No Tanzanian child would be denied the right to education just because the parents could not afford to pay. Measures had also been introduced to encourage children to complete primary education, including special dispensations for girls who had dropped out of school for various reasons, including pregnancy.

14. A decade after the World Summit, more than 10 million children under five continued to die each year from preventable diseases and malnutrition. One hundred million children, 60 per cent of whom were girls, were still not in school. New challenges, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, had made a mockery of government efforts to deal with such problems, particularly in developing countries. Moreover, funds promised at the Summit had not been forthcoming.

15. More attention must be paid to the root causes of the involvement of children in armed conflicts. In any conflict, children remained the losers, regardless of who emerged as the winner; and the trauma they suffered extended well beyond the end of hostilities. While the previous century may have transformed the world, the basic needs of children in the majority of countries remained unmet. In the new millennium, the international community must strengthen its resolve to invest more in the younger generation and to create a world fit for children of both sexes.

16. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador) said that his Government attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, since over half the population was under 25. Many of its efforts had gone into programmes to encourage the participation of children and adolescents in all areas of society and to develop the values of tolerance, freedom, democracy, justice and peace among them. It also attached great importance to their participation in the elaboration of public policies affecting them directly; accordingly, it had convened a youth forum to review the draft national policy for children and adolescents.

17. At the international level, his Government reaffirmed its desire to contribute to preparations for the special session on children. The reasons for its postponement affected the security and welfare of children in all countries suffering from terrorism. However, it was concerned that the negotiations on the draft outcome document were encountering obstacles

that undermined the achievements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. He commended the efforts of Member States, non-governmental organizations, the academic community, religious groups and the media to promote the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 53/25. The strategy for the Decade gave priority to both academic and informal education at all levels on a culture of peace and non-violence. In recent years, children caught up in situations of armed conflict had been both victims and perpetrators of violence; they had been uprooted from their homes, wounded or killed, orphaned, kidnapped, exploited and abused. It was therefore essential to continue efforts to prevent the participation of children in armed conflicts through active promotion of tolerance, dialogue and respect for cultural diversity.

19. **Mrs. G/Mariam** (Ethiopia) said that children were the pillars of a bright and prosperous future. No society could contemplate a successful future and sustained development without making children its priority. Children should be provided with the necessary health care and quality education, and be allowed to grow in harmony away from fear and anxiety. They should be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and conflicts. Special attention should be given to children from poor families and those in especially difficult circumstances, including children with disabilities.

20. The promotion and protection of children's rights formed the nucleus of Ethiopia's social development policies, and significant efforts had been made to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national laws and policies. Specific reference was made to children's rights in the Constitution; family law had been revised accordingly, and revision of the Penal Code was also under way. In addition, preparations were in progress for the adoption and ratification of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thanks to Ethiopia's efforts in the fields of education, social development, women's issues and health, including HIV/AIDS, tangible improvements had been made to the well-being of its children.

21. However, widespread poverty, lack of infrastructure, harmful traditional practices and customs and insufficient resources persisted. The Government had elaborated a National Poverty Eradication Strategy — recently approved by the World Bank — but substantial financial support from the international community was urgently required to assist national efforts. To ensure the survival, protection and development of children, there was need for total debt cancellation, sustained development assistance, fair terms of trade and improved foreign investment. A holistic approach to development must accordingly be emphasized in the draft final document of the special session.

22. **Ms. Šimonović** (Croatia) said that preparations for the special session had been instrumental in bringing children's issues to the forefront of the international agenda. The prolonged preparations should lead to an even stronger outcome document and plan of action that would make a real difference for children worldwide.

23. The special session would provide a unique opportunity to endorse the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a rights-based approach to the needs of children. She was pleased to announce that her Government would sign both the optional protocols to the Convention and had ratified ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Much more needed to be done, however, to bridge the gap between international norms and their actual implementation at grass-roots level.

24. Mandates for restoring, maintaining and building peace should include special provisions on the protection of children. Croatia was still witnessing the effects of war on children; although the Government had provided a great deal of material assistance, the affected children still needed psychological care, which was being offered through country-wide counselling centres. A national human rights education programme in primary and secondary schools was also an integral part of the regular school curriculum. Civil society had played a major role in peace-building, with the participation of children as a critical element.

25. For the benefit of all children, the forthcoming special session must be successful. A "world fit for children" would not create itself; every member of the international community must ensure its realization.

26. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that children were the most vulnerable sector of society and their vulnerability increased in situations of extreme

poverty, violence and armed conflict, including foreign occupation. It was therefore necessary to ensure the full implementation of the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. The special session on children would be an effective means of achieving that end.

27. Her delegation regretted the failure of the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/56/453) to recognize the suffering of Palestinian children, and was concerned that the Secretariat increasingly appeared to be ignoring that important issue and the corresponding resolutions of the General Assembly. It wished to bring the Committee's attention to the ongoing, systematic denial and violation of the rights of Palestinian children living under Israeli occupation, which endangered their survival and impeded their development.

28. Since 28 September 2000, the situation on the ground had seriously deteriorated, worsening the already miserable living conditions of the Palestinian people, particularly the children. The Israeli military campaign had resulted in loss of life, serious injuries, the destruction of property and the restriction of the movement of persons and goods within the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Many of the children affected would be permanently disabled owing to the severity of their injuries.

29. The measures taken by the occupying forces constituted violations of international humanitarian law, including the various conventions relating to children. Moreover, Israeli policies and actions were in grave violation of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which was applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. The international community should exert pressure on Israel to comply with those conventions in order to ensure the protection of Palestinian children.

30. **Mr. Petrič** (Slovenia) said that Slovenia supported all international efforts to ensure better living conditions for children worldwide. The special session on children would be a unique opportunity to evaluate awareness of the importance of safeguarding and nurturing children and to assume further commitments to that end.

31. The international community had made great efforts to remedy the plight of children affected by armed conflict. His Government had launched some important initiatives for the physical and psychological rehabilitation of such children in south-eastern Europe. In particular, it had established a regional centre for their psychosocial well-being, thus developing concepts linking psychosocial well-being to social rehabilitation and development.

32. Slovenia considered that social conciliation in the Balkans depended on the psychosocial profile of the younger generations, and hoped to create a framework for providing a comprehensive approach to protection and assistance for traumatized children. The Centre had been welcomed by the international community, and the collaboration of other countries and humanitarian or similar organizations was invited.

33. **Ms. Crowley** (Australia) said that the improvements in the lives of children over the decade since the adoption of the Convention and the World Summit for Children had been overshadowed, even negated, by their continued subjection to the worst forms of child labour, sexual and other abuse and exploitation and their involvement in armed conflict. The willingness of the international community to set new standards for the protection of children in critical areas — child labour, armed conflict and sexual exploitation — was encouraging, as was the work of UNICEF and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system. The development of further measures to improve the situation of children must take a central position on the international agenda.

34. In conclusion, she read out a message from the Australian youth delegates to the special session to the children of New York, offering their support and sympathy in response to the terrorist attack of 11 September.

35. **Mrs. Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) said that the events of 11 September had drastically changed the world and the expectations of children. In order to regain their confidence, the outcome document of the special session must be a realistic reflection of their hopes for a better future.

36. Suriname, a party to the Convention since 1995, was executing a national programme, in cooperation with UNICEF, with special emphasis on the situation of women and children in the interior of the country. It was also participating in the multi-country programme of cooperation involving countries of the Eastern Caribbean, Suriname and UNICEF.

37. **Mr. Zoumanigui** (Guinea) said that there had been some success on the international level in implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children. The African countries, for their part, had held regional conferences, the most recent in Cairo, which had resulted in a declaration and plan of action presenting a common position on all questions concerning children. However, despite limited progress in some fields, Africa was the continent most severely impacted by problems affecting child survival, development and protection.

38. Guinea had drawn up a programme of action for children in 1992 and had submitted its national review in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/93. Despite the effects of globalization, poverty and instability in West Africa, it had established structures for the dissemination of the Convention. It had, inter alia, revitalized health care and education programmes and expanded immunization coverage. Thus, it was determined to become more actively involved in the global dialogue and activities for the survival, development and protection of children.

39. The end of the cold war, which had coincided with the global commitment to children, had given hope that resources previously allocated to arms would be redirected to social development, but that hope had not been fully realized. The progress mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report to the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session (A/S-27/3) was encouraging, and with the necessary political will, the goals set for children could be met.

40. **Ms. Gligorova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the time had come, after a decade of experience in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for all Member States to reaffirm their commitments to improve their promotion and protection of children's rights, and for every State, family, organization, individual, and society to do their utmost to attain the health, education, nutrition and other goals that would protect children from the many challenges of which they were the prime victims.

41. Despite many improvements at all levels, much clearly remained to be done to make the world fit for children. South-East Europe's bitter experience during the previous decade, including events in her own country, attested to the importance of full implementation of the Convention and its two optional protocols, both of which her Government had signed. It was currently bringing its domestic legislation into line with the Convention and would ensure that the latter was reflected in State policy and enforced in administrative practices. It had appointed an ombudsperson for children's rights and established a National Commission to implement its National Action Plan, as stipulated in the Convention.

42. The Committee's deliberations should focus on the eradication of poverty and the root causes of child rights violations and on the creation of an environment conducive to a happy childhood and children's full and free expression of their personalities and talents.

43. She stressed her delegation's support for the prompt convening of the postponed special session, in which Macedonia intended to participate actively. She hoped that the resolutions to be adopted by the Committee would spur the entire international community, and the United Nations in particular, to greater efforts in behalf of children and to ensure full respect for the rights enshrined in the Convention and its two optional protocols.

44. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) reaffirmed his country's abiding commitment to the abolition of child labour, but disagreed with the Secretary-General that progressive elimination of child labour was the key to poverty eradication. Poverty was the main cause of child labour, and the eradication of both evils should go hand in hand.

45. He was heartened to learn that many Member States had, like Pakistan, signed both optional protocols to the Convention, which, on coming into force, would significantly reduce child trafficking and prostitution and the involvement of children as both victims and soldiers in armed conflict. Ending the suffering of children in armed conflict called for a just and peaceful resolution of the long-standing conflicts raging in many parts of the world.

46. Safeguarding the institution of the family and strengthening the concept of joint parental guidance were vital for a healthy environment in which children could develop. Only a properly functioning family could provide such an environment, since lack of parental guidance and of kinship ties exposed children to negative influences and ultimately to crime.

47. Pakistan's commitment to children was enshrined in its Islamic identity and its Constitution. It remained fully committed to the goals of the World Summit for Children and to the implementation of the Plan of Action. Immediately following its ratification of the Convention in 1990, the Government had strengthened the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development and had assigned it the task of implementing the Convention; over the past decade, great strides had been made.

48. In the area of basic health and welfare, the Government had launched a number of programmes with specific goals for the 2000-2001 biennium, many of which had already been attained. Another priority was education for all, the thrust of which was to prepare children to meet the challenges of the new millennium, with the accent on science and technology, without neglecting the quality of education. Sadly, the enrolment of girls and rural children had not kept pace with improvements, and it was they too who most often dropped out of school. With regard to disabled children, an elaborate network of facilities, initiated with assistance from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, existed for all persons with disabilities. They were governed by the Disabled Persons Ordinance (1981) and supported by many non-governmental organizations and the National Trust for the Disabled.

49. The juvenile justice system was being reformed in accordance with the Convention. A recent law had raised the minimum age of applicability of capital punishment to 18, and provided protection from torture and inhuman treatment. Children enjoyed the same freedom of thought, conscience and religion as adults, as well as freedom of association and assembly. The thorny problem of child labour was being addressed by the Pakistani Government: it had brought the relevant legislation into line with the Convention and the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, had ratified ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and was taking remedial action to rehabilitate working children.

50. Nations would be judged in future by the well-being of their children; in Pakistan the concept of the best interest of the child was reflected in all aspects of life. Despite its difficulties, the Government was determined to make the country and, in turn, the world fit for children.

51. **Mr. Abdul Jabar** (Malaysia) said that children's survival was constrained by poverty, lack of access to basic needs and services, and exposure to abuse, neglect and exploitation. His delegation was dismayed that in recent years children had been both targets and perpetrators of violence. Regarding the commitments entered into at the World Summit for Children to take political action to protect children from war, he entirely endorsed the Secretary-General's view that the best means was to prevent armed conflict at the outset; accordingly, he supported the Secretary-General's emphasis on a culture of peace and prevention.

52. Children in armed conflict should be assured of their physical safety and of protection under international law. In many such situations, not only were children and women targeted with impunity, but children were also forced to participate in armed conflicts in one capacity or another, in violation of their human rights. His delegation firmly believed that there should be no leniency or amnesty for crimes perpetrated on innocent children. By the same token, children who had fought because of their manipulation by adults deserved to be treated humanely.

53. His delegation vehemently condemned the use of rape as a deliberate weapon of war. It endorsed the Secretary-General's appeal for the continued prosecution of sexual violence against women and children as a war crime, and welcomed the fact that the Statute of the International Criminal Court designated rape as both a crime against humanity and a war crime.

54. He bewailed the fact that the plight of Palestinian children and of children under foreign occupation had been all but forgotten for lack of a political solution to the Middle East problem. Only if that problem was addressed could there be any meaningful discussion of the subject. He attributed that state of affairs to both the Security Council's paralysis with regard to that issue and the Special Representative's over-emphasis on armed conflict in Africa.

55. Sanctions, too, had a debilitating effect on children. It was shocking that, according to UNICEF, the lives of over one million children could have been saved but for the sanctions imposed on Iraq, where child and maternal mortality was currently among the highest in the world. His delegation called for the sanctions to be reviewed and lifted immediately. It also urged that, should sanctions become necessary as a measure of last resort, they should be imposed only

after a thorough assessment of their impact on civilians, especially children.

56. Malaysia, a party to the Convention, firmly supported its two protocols, and was gratified at the high ranking it had been given by UNICEF among the Asia-Pacific countries for its child welfare and development and its fulfilment of all the goals of the Convention. The Government's commitment to children had been enhanced by its establishment of the enabling environment manifest in its national plans. The Government worked closely with civil society, in accordance with the concept of shared responsibility initiated by the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development.

57. While he applauded the emphasis placed on children's rights through open meetings of the Security Council on children affected by armed conflict, more importance should be attached to discussion of the issue in the Committee, as the organ competent to further the promotion and protection of children's rights and welfare.

58. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country had been among the first to ratify the Convention, bec ıse that instrument established the groundwork foı .neeting children's basic needs and providing them with the conditions for a sound upbringing, all of which was emphasized in national plans and programmes. Despite lack of funds, the authorities were making sterling efforts to improve conditions for the care and development of children.

59. The Supreme Commission for Children, set up in 1991 to protect children and ensure that their needs were met, comprised representatives of various ministries, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

60. She was extremely disappointed that neither the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Children (A/S-27/3) nor that of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (A/56/453) made any reference to children under foreign occupation, an omission that called their accuracy and objectivity into question.

61. The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan since 1967 negated all human rights, especially those of children; while Palestinian children were martyrs in the eyes of the world. Since children were the adults of the future, it was important for issues concerning them to be addressed without equivocation or double standards. In conclusion, Syria set great store by the success of the special session on children, which it hoped would assess implementation of the commitments made at the World Summit for Children.

62. **Ms. Ivanchenko** (Ukraine) said that, although attitudes towards children had changed for the better, millions of children continued to be exposed to forced labour, prostitution, slavery, HIV/AIDS and armed conflict. The international community must take prompt and concerted action at the highest levels to address such gross infringements of children's rights. Special attention must also be accorded to children living in extreme poverty. Resources devoted to meeting children's most basic needs were meagre by comparison to global expenditure on arms and luxuries. Even a very small level of support from wealthy companies would enable basic social services for children to be guaranteed.

63. In Ukraine, a range of legal mechanisms and national programmes were in place to give effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including a five-year plan of action. Collaboration with UNICEF was under way on projects for children with special needs. Efforts were also being made to reform State care institutions, strengthen child protection in all its dimensions and increase access to education and health facilities. Although the country had registered achievements in such areas, it was seriously challenged by an economy and society in transition. The transformations had had a particularly severe impact on the physical and psychological welfare of children. The number of orphans and of institutionalized, homeless, and delinquent children was only growing. Drug abuse among children and young people was a further problem, which only exacerbated the spread of HIV/AIDS.

64. The high incidence of cancer and other health disorders among children resulting from the Chernobyl disaster was a cause of particular concern to her delegation. With continuing advances in technology, the potential for further ecological disasters was increasing. It was thus vital to devise new strategies to manage such disasters and ensure the protection and development of children. It was evident from the current debate that each country and region had its own specific problems, but that most challenges were global in character.

65. **Mr. Helle** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that children affected by armed conflict required special attention, given their particular vulnerability. However, in order to ensure that they received adequate protection and assistance, it was also necessary to support their families and communities.

66. That approach was reflected in international humanitarian law, and responsibility for implementing that law lay mainly with States and with the parties to an armed conflict. In 2000, ICRC had launched a programme on international humanitarian law to teach young people and encourage reflection on dignity and humanity, the principles underlying that law. About 50 countries had committed themselves to integrating the material into their academic programmes and initial reaction to the course appeared to be promising.

67. The use of child soldiers was one of the most tragic aspects of contemporary conflicts. To address it effectively, efforts should focus both on prevention of recruitment and on demobilization and social rehabilitation. Each of those stages represented a complex challenge, requiring the involvement of multiple actors and institutions. ICRC had contributed to that far-reaching enterprise through their programmes in a number of war-affected countries, particularly in the fields of psychological and social rehabilitation of children affected by violence.

68. **Ms. Johnston** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that child labour was one of the most pernicious threats facing children today. ILO estimated that, throughout the world, some 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 worked for a living; of those, over 50 million children under 11 worked in hazardous circumstances.

69. Child labour was neither valuable work experience nor an apprenticeship combined with schooling. It was abuse of power — exploitation of the young and vulnerable for profit. Its elimination had been a long-standing, major objective of ILO. Since 1919, ILO had adopted various conventions regulating working conditions for children, culminating in 1999 in the unanimous adoption of Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Since then, 100 States had ratified that instrument, which was the fastest rate of ratification for any ILO convention.

70. The rapid growth of ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour had paralleled the growth of the political movement against child labour. The programme was now operating in more than 70 countries, supported by 25 donors. Many countries expressly desired to eliminate all incidences of the worst forms of child labour over a short, defined period, which had prompted the development of "time-bound programmes", aimed at achieving that goal within 10 years. That initiative had been launched in the United Republic of Tanzania, El Salvador and Nepal.

71. In the wake of the horrific events of 11 September, the continuing plight of so many of the world's children should not be overlooked. The preparations for the special session on children would soon resume, and ILO would continue to assist in ensuring that commitments under existing instruments were fully reflected in all discussions. The ILO approach to child labour was firmly based on partnerships among all relevant sectors of society and it was working to eliminate child labour with thousands of partners throughout the world.

72. **Mr. Millo** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that children were the world's most precious possession and should be protected from sickness, poverty, violence, neglect and the horrors of war. To that end, it was particularly necessary to teach them moral values and instruct them in human rights, tolerance and democracy.

73. Children were especially vulnerable and should be sheltered from conflicts and political disputes. Urging them to participate in violence, using them as human shields during violent protests, training them to be holy warriors and glorifying martyrdom through educational programmes was immoral and illegal, under every code of law. The Palestinian leadership should be aware that children who resorted to violence would grow up in a society of terror. More than 95 per cent of Palestinians did not live under Israeli control; they already lived under the Palestinian Authority.

74. The death of any child was a tragedy and Israel deeply regretted casualties among innocent Palestinian civilians killed unintentionally in crossfire. For too many years, Israeli children had been victims of terrorism: they had been deliberately targeted by Palestinian snipers and suicide bombers, and slaughtered and stoned by terrorists. It was necessary to find a way of making the world free from terrorism and fit for children.

75. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement by the representative of Israel was full of distortions. He claimed that the interests and education of children were a priority of the Israeli Government. The principal way to protect children, particularly Palestinian children, was to end the occupation.

76. Israel had repeated countless times that more than 95 per cent of Palestinians lived under the Palestinian Authority; but all of Palestine, including Jerusalem, was occupied territory, because there were Israeli tanks in Palestinian cities and villages throughout the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority, known as Area A.

77. In that regard, two days earlier, Israeli forces had occupied an area under the Palestinian Authority and seized the village of Beit Rima, using full military force. They had killed a number of Palestinians, injured many others and abducted several individuals. The exact number remained unclear because the Israeli occupying forces had cordoned off the village and, according to ICRC, had prevented ambulances from entering. That added an act of State terrorism to Israeli war crimes, despite all the calls for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from the areas that it had recently occupied.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.